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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000870

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV KTEX ETRD CH SF SU ZI

SUBJECT: CHINA ASKED SOUTH AFRICA TO BAR DALAI LAMA FROM CONFERENCE, SAYS SOUTH AFRICAN DIPLOMAT IN BEIJING

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1. 4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: China had appealed to South Africa to bar the Dalai Lama from attending a peace conference at "this particularly sensitive time," a South African diplomat in Beijing told PolOff March 31. While acknowledging the backlash had been more severe than expected, our contact said South Africa had made the "right decision" to avoid jeopardizing bilateral relations and diverting attention away from the 2010 World Cup. He said China preferred to follow the African Union (AU) position on issues such as Zimbabwe and Sudan but was willing to apply pressure on Presidents Mugabe and Bashir for the sake of "stability." The South African diplomat said China was still considering his country's request for China to extend its textiles export quotas. End Summary.

China Appealed to South Africa to Bar Dalai Lama

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¶2. (C) Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi had called South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to urge South Africa not to allow the Dalai Lama to attend a peace conference, South African Embassy Minister Plenipotentiary Dave Malcomson (protect) told PolOff March 31. He said Yang had argued that inviting the Dalai Lama to attend the conference at "this particularly sensitive time" -- two weeks after the 50th anniversary of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan uprising against PRC rule and on the eve of the newly observed "Serf Emancipation Day" March 28 -- would be "problematic" for bilateral relations. (Note: An MFA spokesperson deflected a question on whether China had pressed South Africa to bar the Dalai Lama from attending the conference, noting only that China opposed "any country having official contact" with the Dalai Lama.)

¶3. (C) Malcomson said South African intelligence had information suggesting that the Dalai Lama had planned to use the peace conference to "kick-start his return to Tibet campaign" and that large-scale protests were to have been held at the Chinese Embassy in Pretoria. Allowing the Dalai Lama to use this event as a platform for his political agenda would have shifted the focus from the 2010 World Cup to the Tibetan issue. Furthermore, having President Motlanthe share the stage with the Dalai Lama would have been "totally unacceptable to the Chinese," Malcomson said. South Africa-China relations had "grown by leaps and bounds" over the last 10 years, and South Africa did not want the Dalai Lama's visit to jeopardize its relationship with China or call into question South Africa's commitment to the one China policy.

¶4. (C) Malcomson said the South African government had known there would be a backlash and had "half-expected" the

conference to be canceled, given Archbishop Desmond Tutu's strong support for the Dalai Lama. Although he admitted that the severity of the backlash had been larger than expected, Malcomson insisted that South Africa had made the right decision. He noted that the Dalai Lama had visited South Africa twice before without any problems and that South Africa had left open the possibility of a future visit at a "less sensitive time."

**¶5. (C)** South African Health Minister Barbara Hogan, who publicly criticized the government's decision to deny entry to the Dalai Lama and called on her government to apologize, arrived in Beijing March 31 for World Health Organization (WHO) and bilateral meetings. Malcomson expressed hope that her meetings with the Chinese would remain focused on health issues.

**China Follows the AU Position on Sudan, Zimbabwe**  
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**¶6. (C)** Malcomson described China's approach to African conflicts such as Sudan and Zimbabwe as "wait and see what the AU position is and then follow the AU position." He said China always sent an observer to AU summits but did not influence the AU's decision-making. Once the AU had expressed support for the formation of a unity government in Zimbabwe, according to Malcomson, China had helped facilitate its formation by applying behind-the-scenes pressure on President Mugabe to share power with the opposition. As a major stakeholder in Zimbabwe, China had a "core interest" in maintaining stability. "A crumbling, decaying Zimbabwe is not in China's interests," Malcomson said. China also had applied pressure on Sudanese President Bashir to agree to the

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deployment of UNAMID troops. Although China would not publicize its "interference," the PRC was willing to "quietly pressure" other governments for the sake of "stability," Malcomson said.

**China Considering Extension of Textiles Export Quotas**  
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**¶7. (SBU)** Regarding the contentious issue of Chinese textiles exports to South Africa, Malcomson said the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) had not responded to South Africa's request to extend China's export quotas, which expired December 31. China had offered South Africa funds to upgrade its textiles sector, but the funds had gone unused because South Africa's textiles industry had failed to put together an effective plan. To determine whether an extension of the quotas was justified, MOFCOM had sent a team to study South Africa's textiles industry and planned to send two more teams in the near future. Malcomson said the export quotas had "no discernible influence" on South Africa's textiles industry because other countries had filled the gap created by the quotas.

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